



It's easy to take email for granted, but with a little help you can use it more efficiently and effectively. **Rebecca Crockett** explains how to customise and organise your mail

Fast and convenient, email has made keeping in touch so much easier. Nowadays most people have work email addresses, home accounts provided by an ISP, plus at least one free webmail account, so it can be easy to let your email get out of control. Here we let you in on all the email secrets and tips you'll need to manage your messages effectively. We state which email

program each tip works with and we've covered five popular options: Outlook, Outlook Express (OE), Thunderbird, Hotmail and Google Mail.

Everywhere in the world, except in the UK and a small number of other countries, Google Mail is known as Gmail. Some of the tips here use programs or references to Gmail; they will work fine in Google Mail. You can get a Google Mail account only by invitation. You need to find

someone with an account and get them to send you an invite. When Google Mail first started, users were allocated only three or four invites, but these days new Google Mail accounts have 50 invites to send out. This means it is quite likely you'll know someone who can send you an invite. If you don't, there are a number of sites that give them away on the internet. Try www.bytetest.com.

Set up an email group

Works with Outlook Express, Thunderbird

With a group or mailing list, all you need to do is enter the group's name in the To field of your email message, and it will be sent to all the email addresses listed in that group. In OE, click on Addresses, File, New, New Group. Enter a name for the group then click Select Members. Click on a name and press Select. When you've done this, click OK.

To use the group, either type the group name into the To field or click on Addresses and select it from the list. In Thunderbird, click on the Address Book then on New List. Give the group a name, description and nickname. You have to type each email address. When you've finished, click OK.

Create individual accounts on a PC

Works with Outlook Express

If there's only one computer in your house and everyone uses it, you can keep emails separate and private by setting up individual email identities. There are two processes for this: one for you, one for the other users. You'll also need some technical details, but if you don't still have these from when you first set up your email account, your ISP can provide them. Select File, Identities, Add New Identity. Type a name and tick the Require a Password box. For you, select File, Identities, Manage Identities. Click Main Identity and then Properties. To change users, go to File, Switch Identity.

Send large attachments

Works with Any web browser

Large, bulky attachments may exceed the recipient's mailbox allowance. It's easier to upload large files to the internet and send a link to the recipient. Mail Big File (www.mailbigfile.com) will do this for you. Alternatively, use file transfer protocol (FTP). Your ISP may give you an FTP client for uploading your webpages. Otherwise, use Internet Explorer or download a free FTP client from the internet or the toolkit on our cover DVD. Upload the file to your website then email the link to the recipient. Details such as the address for the FTP server can be supplied by your ISP.



Quick tips

Small changes can make a big difference to your productivity. Our tips will save you time

Change your name

Works with Hotmail

Have a bit of fun and change the name that appears in the From line of emails that you send. Log into your Hotmail account and click Options in the top right-hand corner. Then select Personal from the menu on the left and click My Profile. Change the First Name and Last Name boxes and click Save.

Forward mail

Works with Google Mail

Forward mail from your Google Mail account to multiple accounts automatically. Click on Settings in the top right-hand corner, then on Forwarding and POP. Select Forward a copy of incoming email to. In the first box, enter the name of the account to which you want mail sent. The second box decides what happens to the message in Google Mail. For example, Archive Google Mail's Copy will mark it as read and move it into the archive. Click 'Create a filter' to selectively move email messages to more than one account.

Work without folders

Works with Outlook Express

Save space onscreen by getting rid of the list of folders on the left-hand side of the screen. Click on the X in the top right-hand corner of the panel to remove it. To access folders quickly, press Ctrl-Y and select the folder in the dialog box that appears.

Use message templates

Works with Thunderbird

Open the Templates folder and double-click on a template message. While the new message looks exactly like the template, it is in fact a copy. Take any action you like with it, and the template will remain unchanged.

Search your email

Works with Most email clients

All email programs have a search facility for finding messages. For example, in OE, just click on the Find icon. However, these don't always give the results you want. Luckily, there are other options; you could use the Find feature in Google Desktop (<http://desktop.google.com>) or try an add-on. If you have Outlook 2000, 2002 or 2003, download Lookout 1.2 from <http://tinyurl.com/46shl>.

Turn off HTML

Works with Outlook Express, Thunderbird, Hotmail, Google Mail

Although messages that use HTML look more dynamic, there are good reasons for sticking with plain text when you're writing emails. Plain-text messages are smaller, so they're faster to send and receive; HTML messages are a convenient way for viruses and Trojans to travel, and your message may not look the same on the computer to which it is sent. In OE, go to Tools, Options, Send and select Plain Text under Mail Sending Format.

If you're using Thunderbird, go to Tools, Account Settings, Composition & Addressing. Untick the box next to Compose Messages in HTML format.

Use mail rules

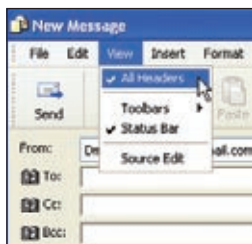
Works with Outlook, Outlook Express, Google Mail, Hotmail, Thunderbird

Mail rules allow you to move incoming messages straight to a folder, to the bin or to another email address, reply automatically, and more. In OE, go to Tools, Message Rules, Mail. In the dialog box that appears, select the condition and action for your rule. For example, select the 'Where the from line contains people' option. In the third box, labelled Rule Description, click the 'contains people' link. In the next box enter the email addresses of the people to

Enable the Bcc field

Works with Outlook, Outlook Express

Addresses entered in the Bcc field can't be seen by anyone except the intended recipient. This is handy for sending emails to large mailing groups, as it means the top portion of the message isn't taken up with a huge list of addresses. However, in OE and Outlook the Bcc field isn't enabled by default. Click on View, All Headers. In Outlook, click View, Bcc.



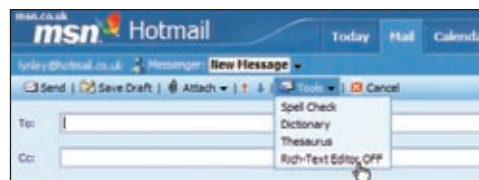
◀ To enable the Bcc option in Outlook Express, go to View, All Headers

Minimise spam

Works with All email clients

Spam is the bane of email. You can use mail rules (see above) to try to keep the stuff to a minimum, but a much better approach is to use a spam filter such as Desktop for Outlook (www.cloudmark.com), winner of a Best Buy award in our anti-spam software Labs test in *Shopper* December 2006. Google Mail comes with an excellent spam filter, and you can transfer your messages to your computer using POP (see opposite) after they have been filtered.

Thunderbird also has a spam filter. To configure this, you need to go to the Tools menu and select Junk Mail Controls. To start, you will need to train Thunderbird to recognise spam by clicking on the Junk icon in the toolbar. Thunderbird can quickly tell you which messages it thinks are spam in a selected folder if you click on Tools and then the option called Run junk mail controls on folder.



▲ Keeping your emails plain and simple makes them easier to read and safer to send

In Hotmail, open a new blank message. Click on the Tools menu and again on Rich Text Editor ON to switch it off. All new messages will open with the Rich Text Editor switched off until you turn it on again. In Google Mail open a new blank message and click on the Plain Text link to achieve the same result.

whom the rule will apply. Continue through the second box to finish the rule. In Outlook 2003, go to Tools, Rules and Alerts, New Rule button. With Outlook 2000, select Tools, Rules Wizard, New. In Google Mail, click Create a Filter and follow the instructions. If you use Hotmail, click Options, Mail, Custom Replies, New Filter. In Thunderbird, select Tools, Message filters, New. It is possible to add a number of criteria and actions to a filter just by pressing the + button.

Bookmark email addresses

Works with Hotmail

Try this time-saving trick if there are email addresses to which you send messages frequently. Create a bookmark or favourites link to any Hotmail page. Click on Add and give it a name such as 'Send Mail to Joe Bloggs'. Then right-click on its link in the Favourites pane or Bookmarks list if you're using Firefox, and select Properties. Change the website address to [http://hotmail.msn.com/cgi-bin/compose?mailto=1&to=\[Email Address\]](http://hotmail.msn.com/cgi-bin/compose?mailto=1&to=[Email Address]), where [Email Address] is the address of the person to whom you'll be sending emails. For example, <http://hotmail.msn.com/cgi-bin/compose?mailto=1&to=joe@bloggs.com>. Provided you're logged into Hotmail, clicking on this link automatically opens a blank message composition page with this email address already entered for you.

Disable the Reading Pane

Works with Outlook

Outlook's Reading Pane (called the Preview Pane in earlier versions) takes up valuable screen space and can slow down opening emails. To turn it off, in Outlook 2000 select View, Preview Pane. In Outlook 2003 select View, Reading Pane, Off. This disables the preview pane only for that folder. If you have your inbox divided into lots of folders, you'll need to repeat the procedure for each one.

To switch them all off at once, in Outlook 2003 right-click on the shortcut icon in the Quick Launch taskbar. Select Properties. On the Shortcut tab, adjust the path in the Target box so it reads "C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\OFFICE11\OUTLOOK.EXE" / recycle /nopreview. In Outlook 2000 and 2002, you'll need to edit the Registry; remember to back it up first. Instructions can be found in Microsoft's support database at <http://tinyurl.com/y35jdf>.



Email maintenance

Works with Outlook Express, Thunderbird

Keeping email manageable means keeping the inbox tidy. In OE, go to Tools, Options, Maintenance, Clean Up Now. To get rid of old messages quickly, click Find on the toolbar and enter a date in the Received Before box. Backing up OE isn't as easy as it should be, but there is a software add-on you can use to simplify the process. Download OEQuick Backup 1.3 from www.softwarepatch.com.

In Thunderbird, use your profile folder to copy messages, contacts and other settings such as filters. Exit Thunderbird. In Windows XP, click Start, Run.

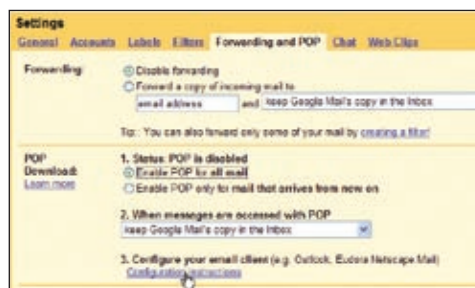
Download mail to one inbox

Works with Outlook Express, Thunderbird, Google Mail, Hotmail

Most of us have more than one email address; at the very least, you'll have a free webmail address and an account from your ISP. You can download all messages from your accounts to your computer, as long as they support POP. Google Mail makes this easy to set up. Click on Settings, Forwarding and POP. Select the option to Enable POP and click on the Configuration instructions link. From here, you can get step-by-step instructions for setting this up with any email client.

Messages can be downloaded from paid-for Hotmail accounts into OE. Go to Tools, Accounts,

Enter %AppData% and press OK. This takes you straight to the Application Data folder, rather than having to go through Documents and Settings to find it. Double-click on Thunderbird, then Profiles. You'll find your profile folder in there. Highlight it, select Copy from the Edit menu and paste to any location. To restore the backup, make sure Thunderbird is closed. Click Start, Run, enter %AppData% and double-click on the Thunderbird folder. Open the Profiles.ini folder in Notepad (Start, Programs, Accessories). Change the Path= line to the new location. Change IsRelative=1 to IsRelative=0.



▲ Google Mail makes it particularly easy to download messages to your PC

Add, Mail to start the Internet Connection wizard. If your Hotmail account is free, you'll need to use an add-on program such as FreePOPS (www.freepops.org/en).

Reply with message

Works with Outlook Express, Outlook, Hotmail, Thunderbird

You may always want to include the message you're replying to, or you may prefer to keep your messages short and sweet. To do this automatically, in OE go to Tools, Options. On the Send tab tick, or untick, the box next to Include message in reply. Outlook (versions 2000, 2002 and 2003) also keeps this feature under Tools, Options. Click on the E-mail Options button on the Preferences tab.

In Hotmail, go to Options, Mail, Message Replies. To change how it works in Thunderbird, go to Tools, Account Settings, Composition and addressing.

Attach a signature

Works with Outlook Express, Thunderbird

It's handy to have a new message open with your name and contact details already inserted. In OE, click Tools, Options, Signatures, New. Rename the signature and enter the details in the Edit Signature box. If you've already created a signature, select File and click Browse to locate it. Tick the box next to Add signatures to all outgoing messages. In Thunderbird, you must create a text (.txt) file first. Use Notepad (Start, Programs, Accessories). Go to Tools, Account Settings and click on your username or email address. Tick the box next to Attach this signature, then click Choose to locate your signature file.

Handy add-ons

If there's something about your email client that bugs you, the chances are someone has written an add-on or extension that will fix it. Here are five of those that we've found the most handy:

Attachment extractor

Works with Outlook Express

This program filters attachments, saving them to folders on your hard disk. For example, you can have attachments sent by a specific sender extracted to their own folder. It is easy to work with and set up, and makes maintaining your mailbox much easier. Download a copy from www.nsware.com.

Gmail macros

Works with Google Mail

You'll need the Firefox web browser for this handy extension, which makes using Google Mail so much quicker. Go to <http://persistent.info> and click on the first Gmail Macros link at the top of the page. It adds keyboard shortcuts to Google Mail, such as pressing Z to mark a message as unread.

Signature switch

Works with Thunderbird

Setting up a signature in Thunderbird is easy (see left). This extension allows you to set up more than one signature, and switch between them using a button on the toolbar. Download the program from <http://tinyurl.com/yhnmw79>.

Klipfolio inbox watcher

Works with Hotmail

This little add-on just lets you know when mail has arrived in your Hotmail account. It could prove indispensable. Just go to <http://klipfolio.com> and click on Hotmail under Editor's Picks. On the next page click on the first link, Download KlipFolio. You'll need to install this before you are able to add the Inbox Watcher Klip.

Mail notifier

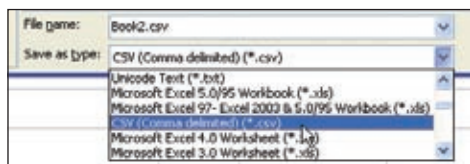
Works with Google Mail

You can be alerted when new mail arrives in Google Mail, too. Gmail Notifier puts a little icon in the notification area. A pop-up message lets you know when a new message arrives, who it is from and the first line of the email. Download the beta version from <http://tinyurl.com/g5pcy>. ☞

Export contacts

Works with Hotmail

If you've been using your free Hotmail account for a while, you will have built up a lot of contacts. It is possible to transfer these to the address books in other programs. In Hotmail, click on Contacts, Print View. Highlight everything, including the top line of Name, Email, Phone. Select Edit, Copy and open a blank spreadsheet. Select Edit, Paste. Check there are no empty rows, and all the email addresses are under E-mail and not Name. Save it, and in the Save As Type box select the option with CSV in it. You can import the file into the contacts of programs such as Outlook.



▲ Use all the contacts you've built up in Hotmail by copying them to your PIM address book

Close and re-open Hotmail accounts

Works with Hotmail

If you don't use your free Hotmail account for 90 days, Microsoft will delete it and all the emails it contains. Your username will also be up for grabs. If you want to keep this, it is important to remember to use the account now and again, and sign in at least once every 10 days. However, it can also be handy to shut down your account now and again, as all messages sent to the account will be bounced back to the sender, hopefully removing you from a number of email spam lists as an inactive account. It is possible to do this, and keep your username reserved, provided you reactivate the account within 30 days. Make sure you save any emails you want to keep as this will also delete all messages in the account. Log into your email account, then go to www.hotmail.msn.com/cgi-bin/accountclose and click on Close my account. To reactivate the account, you just need to sign in again.